

(From *MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS' FISH HEALTH POLICY*,  
December 2, 2003, (Revised June 23, 2004)

## **X. Wild Fish Transfers**

No wild salmonid fish may be collected or transported by the general public, except as allowed by Montana fishing regulations.

Wild salmonid fish may be transported by FWP in accordance with the FWP wild fish stocking policy (Appendix 3).

No wild salmonid fish may be transported from one body of water in Montana to another body of water in Montana until the proposed transfer has been reviewed as prescribed in the wild fish transfer policy. This review shall include a review of the fish health status of the fish proposed for movement. Following are minimum testing guidelines, which must be followed prior to moving wild salmonid fish:

The FWP Fish Health Committee will evaluate each proposed wild fish transfer on a case-by-case basis, and consideration will be given to unique populations of wild fish, especially when limited numbers of fish are present in the population. Transfers of wild fish often involve collecting fish from limited population size and/or fish which are, for a variety of reasons, considered too important or valuable to kill the required number for health testing purposes. These cases will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions will be considered by the FWP Fish Health Committee. Exceptions may be granted based on health testing results of other salmonid fish from the same body of water, past health history, importance of the stock, and other considerations. The fish health committee shall decide whether or not to grant an exemption. The decision of the committee shall result in a recommendation, which shall be submitted to the FWP Fisheries Division Administrator for approval.

Recommended guideline: *R. salmoninarum*, the bacteria responsible for bacterial kidney disease, is known to occur at low levels in many, if not all, wild salmonid populations in Montana. Since this bacteria is so widespread in Montana, it is very likely transferred with wild fish when they are moved from one place to another. Montana FWP is aware of this possibility, and it is considered when evaluating wild fish transfer requests. However, since it is already widespread in Montana, wild fish transfers of fish from waters, which are known to harbor *R. salmoninarum*, to fishless waters, or waters where the bacteria is already known to be present, may be approved by the FWP Fish Health Committee. In some cases it may be valuable to test fish with ELISA to determine level of infection in the fish in donor and receiving waters. The purpose of this guideline is to state that wild fish infected with low level *R. salmoninarum* may be moved from one location in Montana to another, if the bacteria is already present in the receiving water or no fish are present in the receiving water, with the approval of the FWP Fish Health Committee. This recommendation is necessary, given the urgency and importance of many wild fish transfer requests, which are initiated to preserve and protect sensitive

species in Montana. In considering these requests, the Fish Health Committee must consider the importance of the requested transfer and evaluate risk to the resource.

Recommended guidelines:

Prior to moving fish under the wild fish transfer policy, the following minimum health testing must be conducted:

**A. Live Salmonid Fish**

Fish must be inspected for Class A and B pathogens. It is recommended that testing be conducted at the 5% level as described in BLUEBOOK whenever possible. However, since it will not always be possible to test fish at the 5% level, fewer fish may be considered by the FWP Fish Health Committee. Fish selected for this testing may include the species of fish proposed to be transferred or other salmonid fish present in the water fish will be collected from. Health history of the water the fish will be stocked into will also be considered.

**B. Live Salmonid Eggs**

When eggs are collected from the wild, the brood source shall be tested at the BLUEBOOK 5% level or 100% of the fish contributing to the egg take. In addition, ovarian fluid shall be collected from either 100% of contributing females or 150 adult females shall be tested. If ovarian fluid is not available from 150 females, seminal fluid from males may be used to supplement the sample.

Recommended guidelines: Since it is not always possible to test all fish contributing to the egg take or to sacrifice fish, testing of other salmonids in the same water and non-lethal sampling of adults may be considered. Non-lethal sampling may consist of ovarian and seminal fluid testing for virus and ovarian fluid testing for *R. salmoninarum*.

**C. Non-Salmonid Fish**

Non-salmonid fish will be considered separately and a fish health inspection may not be required if, (1) no salmonids are present in the donor water, (2) no salmonids are present in the receiving water, and (3) no known pathogens or parasites of concern are present in the donor water.